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SUBJECT: U/S LARSON MEETS YOUNG JORDANIAN PROFESSIONALS

1. (U) Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Alan Larson met on Tuesday, February 24, with a group of dynamic young Jordanian professionals and university students in a roundtable discussion. Following introductory remarks by Larson, participants raised a variety of concern that mainly focused on future prospects for young professionals and entrepreneurs in Jordan and the region and how the US policy could improve those prospects. Issues of concern to the group were the persistent political risk in the region as a hurdle to investment and Jordan's need for more training assistance as opposed -- the group thought -- to financial assistance. Some of the participants expressed their view that Jordan's and the region's policies and economies needed to reform and grow in order to accommodate the fast growing and very young population. They concurred with Larson that Jordan's biggest asset is its people; yet, as one participant pointed out, the prospects for a young population could also be negative if the economy is not able to accommodate and utilize their energy.

3. (U) The meeting concluded with a positive feeling that the future is bright for the region and that Jordan is positioned to capitalize on the many opportunities for business and trade creation in the region and with the U.S. They hoped an improved investment climate would attract socially conscious multinational companies.

4. (U) Comment: The group was made up of members of the Rotaract Clubs of Jordan and the USAID-supported Young Entrepreneurs Association. Background on these organizations follows. The give and take format of the meeting was a very effective tool for reacting out to aspiring young professionals. In future such events, we would seek to arrange for press coverage in order to multiply the public impact.

-- The Young Entrepreneurs Association was established in November 1998 as a non-profit organization with the mission of creating outstanding young entrepreneurs through idea exchange, fellowship, education, training and advocacy, to enhance entrepreneurs' skill level allowing them to compete in the global economy. YEA receives support from several agencies, including USAID. Some of YEA projects and services include: The Annual Entrepreneurship Forum (next round July 2004); Jordan Vision 2020; the Education Policy Paper Mentoring Program; Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs Program, and the Arab Forum for Young Entrepreneurs (AFYE). Web address: www.yea.com.jo

-- Rotaract is part of the Rotary International family, Rotaract clubs are for young men and women ages 18 - 30, professionals or university students. Rotaract is present in many countries throughout the world; in the region, Rotary District 2450 is made of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus, Bahrain, Sudan and Dubai. Jordan has three Rotaract Clubs: Rotaract Amman, Amman - Philadelphia and Amman - Petra. Among their numerous activities, the three clubs have hosted several events and activates with the American Embassy in Amman: a debate with the Council of American Moslems for Understanding (CAMU) in December 2002; a session on Youth Groups and the Internet in August 2003; and two events for visiting members of American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) in September 2003. Web address: www.rotaract2450.org.
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